DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 133 045 PS 008 920

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TITLE Oral History: Research and Teaching Tool for Educators.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Childhood Attitudes; Child Rearing; Children; Education Courses; Elementary School Teachers; *Higher Education; *Interviews; Observation; *Oral History; *Teacher Education; Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teaching Methods; Violence

ABSTRACT

Presents a rationale for the use of oral history, a method for collecting oral history, and descriptions of how oral histories have been used in teacher education courses. Using oral history is seen as a way of redressing traditional history's neglect of women, the popr and other second class citizens, as well as helping students realize that "doing history" is as risky as any other enterprise that attempts to arrive at the truth. Six oral history projects are discussed: (1) the Kent State shootings--interviews with children who were on campus at the time and adults who were actually involved; (2) American education, 1925-1976--American education as charted through the eyes of a first-grade teacher who remained at the same school for 50 years; (3) the Israeli War, 1973--a study of the perceptions of Israeli school children present during the war; (4) the Akron Head Start program, 1965-1976--interviews with original teachers, parents, and pupils; (5) three generations of child rearing--interviews with grandmothers, mothers and grandchildren; (6) life in a concentration camp--interviews with elementary school children of concentration camp survivors. (MS)

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ORAL HISTORY:
RESEARCH AND TEACHING TOOL FOR EDUCATORS

by

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"The soldiers kept coming and shooting. They shot people without guns and they were Americans!"

This could have been an eyewitness account of the Boston Massacre in 1770; where in fact, it is an account of the 1970 Kent State shootings. An account, however, rendered not by a student nor a guardsman nor a newsman, but by Steve, a ten-year-old who was on Campus on that tragic day. Until recently, Steve's view, to say nothing of those of ordinary folk like us, would never have been deemed important enough to be entered into the annals of history. Yet today there is a new breed of scholar, known as oral historians, who would consider our and Steve's opinions not only important, but essential to the writing of history.

History, as has been traditionally written, is lopsided. It has been the recording of events as seen solely through the eyes of kings and generals...never slaves and privates. History is top heavy with views of "big wigs" while want of the experiences of little people. Yet those very people, however low their station in life, made the very events of history possible.

While history in general has been notoriously remiss with women, the poor, and other second class citizens, educational history has particularly neglected those individuals around which the entire edu-

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cational enterprise is centered: students and teachers. Admittedly we have much research on children and teachers, yet rarely do we single out either to ask their impressions about events they have experienced, especially those events that have altered and shaped the destiny of American education - be they Kent State, the Great Depression, television, Deweyism, Head Start, etc.

As teacher educators we took one step towards redressing this neglect by collecting and using oral histories as basic content for our courses. Courses which lent themselves to this content were: the History and Philosophy of Education, the Foundations of Education, Child Study, Principles of Primary Education, Curriculum Theory, School and Community and Early Childhood Methods. Up to this point, six oral history projects have been attempted; four are completed and two are in progress.

1. The Kent State Shootings - An investigation of the impressions of children who were attending the University School and a neighboring parochial school on May 4, 1970. (Lehane and Goldman, 1975)

2. American Education, 1925-1976 - The course of American education is charted through the eyes of Violet Lange who has taught the first grade for over 50 years. (Goldman and Lehane, 1976)

3. Israeli War, 1973 - An examination of the perceptions of Israeli pre-school children during war time stress. (Goldman, 1974)

4. Akron Head Start, 1965-1976 - A compilation of interviews with the original teachers, parents, and pupils who participated in one of the first anti-poverty programs in America. (Lehane and Goldman, 1975)

5. Child Rearing, 1900-1976 - Changing patterns of child rearing gathered through the recollections of three generations of parents: grandmothers, mothers, and grandchildren. (Lehane - in progress)

6. Life in a Concentration Camp - Interviews completed by

elementary school children of concentration camp survivors.

Before describing how these histories have been used in courses, let us detail the procedure we have fashioned for collecting oral histories.

I. Definition - Oral history is a method of systematic interviews that seek to preserve for posterity the memories of ordinary men and women who have had an opportunity to observe matters of significant historical value (Hoyle, 1972). Though in a state of rejuvenation, oral history can trace its roots to Herodotus and Thucydides. During their lifetimes, matters of state were preserved not in writing but conveyed orally. In compiling their treatises, these historians trusted the testimony of people who played both large and small parts in the events they were chronicling. With the advent of written records, the oral tradition slipped from favor and was replaced by a histography that relied chiefly on authoritative documents and records. Basing one's research on such documents became history's official research tool. Unfortunately, "authoritative" meant documents that were biased and slanted towards the rich, powerful, and elite since only they could afford to commission the writing of history. Consequently for the last 1,500 years the views of the common people have been left out of history. It was not until after World War II that Professor Allen Nevins restored such views to their proper status as a legitimate research material for scholars (Bellington 1975). Nevins, an outstanding historian, acknowledged for his scholarship and writings on the Civil War did not abandon the "official" method, but rather argued that both documentation and oral accounts

were necessary to produce a true and balanced picture of history. Persuaded by this argument, Columbia University in 1948 established an oral history research center. Following suit, similar centers were organized at other universities. From these centers evolved the methodology we applied to our oral history studies.

II. Method

1. Preparation: Exhaustive reading on the topic to be studied (e.g. Head Start).

2. Simulation: Investigators interview each other and establish what questions will be covered during the actual interview.

3. Interview: Interviewers are sent out in pairs. Open ended questions are employed which allow subjects to explain how they saw the situation and what it meant to them (e.g. Why? How? Why did you do that?) (Dexter, 1970; Gordon, 1969).

   a) The interview is recorded on a cassette tape recorder while notes are also jotted down in case of a tape malfunction.

   b) Photos are taken of the subject and old photos related to the event under study are collected.

4. Debriefing: Investigators meet and discuss the tape to determine if additional interviews are necessary.

5. Transcription: The tapes are typed and edited.

6. Final Draft: Final copy is written and approved by the subject.

7. Finished record: Photographs and original tapes are then integrated into class content.

Because of the newness of the oral method, we wanted to become better acquainted with it before including students in the entire process. This meant students would only be involved in the steps from debriefing to the finished record. As we became more comfortable with the method, we began to include students in the total

process as is the case in the child rearing study. Let us examine in detail a sample of our studies and then turn to how they were integrated into class content.

Project I - Kent State Study

Rarely are children asked anything about educational politices, let alone their views regarding the socio-political and moral issues of the Kent State shootings. Considered by many commentators to be a turning point in American history, the events of Kent State are destined to have their ultimate impact, not upon the generation who triggered this tragedy, but upon those who were but young children on that fatal May 4, 1970. It is the authors contention that the views of these young children will be of unestimable importance in shaping the eventual moral interpretation accorded the May 4 shootings. This contention is bolstered by a twenty-year longitudinal study conducted by Kagan and Moss (1962), in which they concluded: "Many of the behaviors exhibited by the child during the period six to ten years of age...were moderately good predictors of theoretically related behaviors during early adulthood."

Unfortunately once again, in the case of Kent State, the child's view has been omitted; especially the perceptions of those very impressionable five-, six-, and seven-year-olds who were attending the University's laboratory school on that tragic day. From this omission grew our research which was to be an oral history of those campus school children who directly experienced the shootings of May 4.

Our first task was to track down these children and interview them. At the University School we found ten pupils who in 1970 were

either in the school's kindergarten or first grade. It is at this young age that children first express their feelings about war and peace (Cooper, 1965).

Since the campus school was known for its liberal leanings, we sought ten comparable children from a more conservative institution, a neighboring parochial school. All children interviewed were between ten and eleven years of age, making them ideal subjects since research has shown this to be the age-range in which political attitudes are formed for life (Hess & Easton, 1961; Greenstein, 1965).

We hypothesized that the children would answer the interview questions differently according to the schools they attended because of the following reasons: (1) different types of families would select the University School over the parochial school; (2) the University School children had more directly experienced the shootings than did the parochial school children; and (3) the parochial school children tended to be from working class families in contrast to the more middle class families of the University School children. Our reasons were grounded in the works of Hess and Torney (1961), Stephens (1967), and Burton (1936) which pointed to the importance of family and schooling upon the political socialization of young children.

The interview centered around twenty-four questions. Twelve items dealt with the children's factual knowledge of the events surrounding May 4; the other twelve focused on the child's interpretation of these events. Factual knowledge was included because of Preston's (1942) finding that the extent to which factual knowledge was presented influenced children's views on war and violence.

Factual knowledge was ascertained by the following items:

1. *Do you know anything about the shootings that happened here (at the University) in 1970 (or a few years ago)?*

2. *What happened?*

3. *Who was there?*

4. *Why were the soldiers (national guard) on the campus?*

5. *What were you doing when you heard about the shootings?*

6. *How did you feel when you heard about the shootings? Who was "right" and "wrong" during the shootings?*

name	*what did he do*	*was he right or wrong*	*don't know*	*why*
7. *Governor Rhodes*				
8. *students*				
9. *soldiers (national guard)*				
10. *Kent police*				
11. *Helicoptor pilots*				
12. *University teachers*				
13. *your parents*				

14. *Do your friends agree with your feelings in #7-13?*
Yes _____ No _____ Explain.

15. *Do your teachers agree with your feelings in #7-13?*
Yes _____ No _____ Explain.

To determine the impact of "dramatic events" upon children's responses we inserted two photographs. One captured the students' defiant reaction to the massing of national guard; while the other depicted the guardsmen assembling and preparing to march on the students. The following two questions were asked with each photo.

"Tell me what's happening in this picture." "How do you think the students (soldiers) feel?"

The interpretative section of the interview focused on the resolution of the following dilemma:

> *On a campus where windows have been smashed and buildings burned, should soldiers shoot unarmed students who are hanging around in noisy groups and who may start throwing rocks? Yes _____ No _____ Reasons to support your answer.*

Our preliminary analysis of the taped interviews suggested the following trends:

1. The reasons or justifications given in answer to the dilemma were analyzed via Kohlberg's System of moral developments (Kohlberg, 1971). No differences were found between the two groups: 9 out of 10 children at the University School, as well as 9 out of 10 children at the parochial school, would not fire at the students under the conditions as stated in the above dilemma.
2. The parochial school children tended not to model their parents' views, whereas the University School children mirrored their parents' views and attitudes.
3. All children displayed sophisticated forms of reasoning in the resolution of the moral dilemma. Piaget and Kohlberg have found that such reasoning usually occurs in much older children.
4. Children from the University School possessed more factual knowledge concerning the shootings:
   a. they could identify many of the participants: Governor Rhodes, the national guard, etc.;
   b. they could pinpoint the exact location of the incident;

c. they could clearly recall what school related work they were doing when the shootings started; and

d. they could recall their parents' responses.

Since this paper is primarily concerned with the methodology of oral history, the findings of each study will be kept brief. Another paper devoted fully to the findings of our Kent State study is being prepared.

Application to Coursework

After examining the above findings, a group of students in a Child Development class initiated the following project: "A comparison of children's and adults' judgments of May 4." The adults choosen to study were all party to the shootings. Basing the comparison on adult quotes taken from newspapers - "I fired because I felt my life was in danger" - the adults were found to be operating on a lower moral level than the children interviewed.

However intriguing this comparison, it was played down by another segment of the class who had just finished a project called RAW or Rational Alternatives to War (Lehane, 1974). RAW ("war" spelled backwards) is a board game dealing with a number of major military campaigns (i.e. the Punic War, the Charge of the Light Brigade, Waterloo, etc.). Its aim is to tap youngsters' interpretations, justifications and alternatives to war. The game illustrated that children are not as virtuous as depicted in the Kent State study. Building on these two studies, a third student project was initiated that sought to interview the parents of the more belligerent and pacific children identified by means of the RAW game.

In summary, the Kent State study and related group projects

allowed university students to take pride in being able to treat a subject in some depth, while avoiding the urge to make quick and unfounded generalizations about the subject. This introduction to oral history enabled the students to understand that to get a total picture of what happened and why it happened, people from all walks of life must be studied. In fact, we were taken to task by the university students for only using onlookers (the children) in our study to the exclusion of participants.

Such sentiments of restraint, doubt, and caution are normally associated more with seasoned researchers than with green undergraduates. It is our hope that these sentiments will remain and continue to help these young men and women shape their views and judgments about the world. The sentiments have certainly changed us as exemplified by the fact that we are now doing less observing and more participant type studies as you will see as the remaining oral history projects are presented.

Project II - American Education, 1925-1976

Mrs. Lange's Fifty-One Years at Franklin School

Where were you in 1925? Starting school? Landing your first job? Or maybe still a dream yet to be born? Wherever you were, chances are you are not there today. Unless like Violet Lange, 1925 marked the year she came to the Franklin school and then stayed for 50 years as its first grade teacher!

Helping to shape the minds of a thousand children for over half a century is an accomplishment few can boast. While doing it in one school, renders her career all the more unique. Especially

if you consider the opportunity it offered her to be a constant observer of those changes and forces which have come to alter the course of American education - from what it was in those halcyon days of the "20's" to the turbulent days of today.

Mrs. Lange perceived that the Franklin school community had moved from small time rural America, anchored to the family, to today's larger than life cities and corporations. In attempting to structure an interview that would meet our needs, we came up with over 30 broad questions. Three examples accompanied with Mrs. Lange's answers follow:

1. *How do you see school and community relations now and then?*

"The school then belonged to the community. An example of this was the weekly Saturday night dances held at the school. The dances were sponsored jointly by the school's "mothers club," the Grange, and the Farm Bureau. These dances were not age segregated - parents brought their children who joined the adults in the festivities. The parents made beds out of coats for the young children so that the adults could continue to enjoy the late hours of the evening."

What we teased from this response was that there was more of a feeling of social cohesion and togetherness when the Franklin school community was small and rural. Such an interpretation is supported by the research of Katz (1949) and Larson (1949). This type of social cohesion was even found among the school's small faculty as Mrs. Lange related.

We (the faculty) worked as a full group. We seemed to be more like a family. Nowadays we are on speaking terms and friendly terms, but we don't have the closeness that we had as a family among the teachers.

2. *Have your duties changed over the last 50 years?*

"Yes. Teachers were instructed to visit the home of each child during the school year. These visits usually included a lunch or dinner. One of the indirect effects of these

> visits, was to lessen the anxiety of the younger children toward school; they became familiar with teachers prior to their first school experiences. I even visited working parents in the fields and at work if the luncheon/dinner visit could not be arranged."

The Thomas (1959) study would corrobrate Mrs. Lange's contention that roles in small informal settings were much broader than they would be in more formal institutions.

3. How have the schools taught values?

> "The school used a direct approach to teach the correct values to the children. Each year back then the minister of the local church warned the children on the evils of alcohol. Look at this school newspaper from 1929: 'January 16 was observed as Temperance Day. In addition to the parts taken by the pupils, Mr. W.A. Apley spoke on Early Mankind and the Beginnings of Liquor.'"

The direct approach used for moral education by the Franklin School contrasts with the value analysis or value clarification procedures used today (Galbraith and Jones, 1975). We now ask children to examine their own values on such issues as "authority", "right", "wrong." Keeping in mind the secularity of today's school, it was interesting to find in the Speedometer (1929) this excerpt:

> The entire student body took part in the presentation of a Christmas operetta based on the nativity story of Jesus Christ. A large crowd witnessed the successful event and we are happy to relate was considered very much of a success.

Application to Coursework

Students of education are required to complete courses in the history and philosophy of education. The usual student critique of these courses focuses on the lack of relevance of the experiences. The following oral history strategies might improve students' knowledge and interest in educational history and philosophy:

1. Students interview a small sample (2-4) of people in

each of the following age levels: 20-30; 30-40; 40-50; 50-60; 60-70; 70-80. The focus of these interviews would be on the interviewees' experiences as pupils in the schools;

2. Students interview a similar sample as in #1 with an additional criterion - the entire sample is/have been teachers. The focus of the interview will be on the sample's perceptions of changes in educational practices and philosophy.

Project III - Israeli School Children During Wartime Stress

This oral history began in Israel when I (Goldman) was walking with my five-year-old child to kindergarten during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. As a frightened pre-schooler, my child had numerous questions that he wanted his father to answer: "Why is there war?" "Are we safe?" "Whose airplane do I see in the sky now?" "Why are soldiers with machine guns in front of my school?" We sat down briefly on a park bench to continue our discussion. As my son spoke, I wrote down all of his questions. When we arrived at the school, I obtained permission from the kindergarten teacher and a nursery teacher to interview their children using the questionnaire developed by my child. I mentioned in an article in Social Education (Goldman, 1974):

> Voluminous amounts of material have been written about the 1973 war (and the other wars) in regard to strategies used, men killed, tanks lost and airplanes downed; little attention has been paid to the group that is perhaps most affected by the war - young children.

These 4 and 5 year old children were affected by the war - brothers, uncles, fathers and grandfathers were far from home for

weeks and months at a time. The children could see and feel the anxiety of the predominant female society of which they were now a part. The kindergarten children had considerably more factual knowledge of this crisis than did nursery children - "Who is Moshe Dayan?" "Who is Golda Meir?" "What is a Phantom/Mirage?" Both groups had creative solutions for ending the war:

"Stop turning on the sirens."

"Police can stop wars."

"Get people away from one another."

"On the Sabbath people don't fight."

We could continue to build this oral history by going back to these two groups of children to ascertain how their knowledge and fears/anxieties have changed over time. Other possible participants in this oral history could include young soldiers who faced their first battle, or seasoned soldiers in their second or third war, or women who were young adults in 1948 and who are now grandparents; the oral history could focus on how their fears and anxieties changed over a prolonged period of wartime crisis.

Application to Coursework

We Americans live in a crisis filled time. College students in education (and the related social sciences) could complete a series of oral histories on the effect of crisis on young children. For example:

1. In 1974, the people of Xenia, Ohio experienced one of the most devastating tornados in American history. Students could interview children to obtain their picture of what happened and to analyze the fears the children continue to have;

2. Children are often most directly effected by social conflicts. College students could interview black and

white students who were and are involved in school desegregation. From the successes, problems, and fears of the children, the college students could propose changes to improve the interaction from the perspectives of those who are most directly involved - children.

Project IV - Akron Head Start, 1965-1975

The longest running production in town is not featured at the theaters, but in the schools. Yearly changes of characters, backers and critics have not dented its box office. Playing before packed houses in virtually every locale across the land, Head Start boasts the longest run of any educational spectacular of equal scope, intensity, and promise.

Curious as to Head Start's vitality, curious as to what has kept this national program going while others have failed, we started questioning some of its original stars, ten children in Akron, Ohio, who made up one of our nation's first Head Start classes, a class that goes back to the Summer of 1965.

Our questioning soon set the stage for another study: an oral history of Head Start as told by its original participants (the children) and their supporting cast of teachers and parents.

Through our interviews, it was obvious that many roles had changed over the last ten years. Our stars are now teenagers as were most of the Head Start aides during that first summer. While a number of the original teachers have climbed to administrative posts, several of the aids have completed college, married, and had offspring who currently attend Head Start classes. However, today's classes are markedly different from earlier versions. Heavier dosages of skill development and individualization along with better

screening programs, to say nothing of the roles now being played by Head Start families are just a few of the curricular and program changes that have come into play since the compensatory education curtain first went up in 1965.

Despite all these changes the core ingredient that kept Head Start alive remained the same - the community. An incredibly complex cooperative effort of diverse people, agencies and institutions worked together to give Head Start the same chance it was trying to give our children. Though this educational experiment occasionally came up short of cash, materials and achievement scores, it never lacked a commitment from its community. Cutting across all our interviews was an awareness and gratitude for how the Akron community pulled together to keep things going: whether it was the school board, "that ran Head Start for months without a cent from Washington" or a father who took a night job in a mill so his days would be free for another eight hours as a Head Start volunteer.

The study really jolted some of our students in a Curriculum Theory class. As educators they assumed a program's success hinged on its changing curricula where, in fact, its success stemed from solid community backing. Picking apart the concept of community, the students began to see it as an interrelationship of institutions, folkways, mores, political systems, moral codes, social status levels, etc. What immediately hit these students was the inadequacy of achievement tests and teacher rating systems for evaluating school programs.

Project V - Three Generations of Child Rearing

Has something like this ever happened to you? It is 8:30 in

the morning and you are rushing to get out of the house but cannot find your shoes. Suddenly you spot them floating in the toilet where they have been hidden by your little one-year-old son. Did you stay calm with him, like Beverly our 77-year-old grandmother? Or did you blow up like Sally, her teenaged granddaughter? "Sure the baby had been annoying" said Martha, Sally's middle-aged mother. "But it's these pranks," she continued, "that are often needed by the baby for exploring and learning."

These three reactions are a sample of the type we are recording in our child rearing study which is attempting to describe how the handling of children has evolved over three generations within five families. Oscar Lewis' Children of Sanchez (1961) was used as the prototype for this project; one that was initiated and put together by graduate students in an infant development class.

Project VI - Children as Oral Historians

One final application of oral history has been with elementary school aged pupils. We have all been brow beaten with Dewey's lament that the subject matter of the schools is in fact isolated from the subjects of life. However today we are in the midst of the "New Social Studies" with its thrust towards community action and field studies (Seebolt, 1975). What better way to get involved in the community and sharpen one's inquiry and problem solving skills than with oral history. It gives kids first hand and concrete experiences with local citizens. Such experiences should be lively and exciting rather than being dull, boring and contrived as one often finds in the typical social studies class. Currently, a few of our students are working with some older elementary pupils in working

out a method for interviewing survivors of the Nazi death camps.

CONCLUSION

The point of this paper has been that the stuff of history is all around us. It is not distant in time and location. Yet as Allen Nevins (1950) put it: "We have all at sometime or another wished that we had been placed where we might see epochal events pass before our eyes." Nevins goes on to say, "too seldom do we recognize that the daily occurrences that seem commonplace to us today will fascinate historians of the future."

By involving our students in oral history, we felt that they would come away with the understanding that doing history is risky, as is any enterprise that attempts to arrive at Truth. For Truth is a puzzle with many pieces missing, and oral history is one approach for adding a few more pieces that for generations have been denied from mankind.

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